

CHAPTER 4:

The behaviours and competencies that drive
leaders and their organisations' performance

Our research underpinnings

During the 1980s, through intensive research with colleagues, I sought to identify and understand the behavioural characteristics that underpinned excellent performance. I wanted to understand how an individual needed to operate in order to deliver the type of leadership dynamic described in the previous chapter. Put another way, what is it that differentiates an outstanding from an average performer in terms of results delivery?

The research ranged across sectors, from the military to petro-chemical companies to pharmaceuticals to financial services to manufacturing to retail, and in all parts of the globe. As such, the behaviours identified in our work do cross cultural boundaries, although it must be said that there are subtle 'modes' that characterise their delivery in different parts of the world.

In addition to sectors and geographic regions, we have studied a wide array of functional groupings together with levels of operation ranging from the shop-floor to the Chief Executive. Table 4.1 shows a summary of some of the specific types of roles and groupings where research has been conducted.

The Chief Executive	The Food Scientist (chocolate to be precise!)
The Executive Director	The Physicist
The CFO or FD	The Chemical Engineering Plant Manager
The HR Director	The Chemical Plant Operator
The CIO	The Contact Centre Team Leader
The IT Director	The Contact Centre Advisor
The Customer Service Director	The Factory Supervisor
The Corporate Banker	The Mechanical and Electrical Engineer
The Investment Fund Manager	The Vicar
The Trust Fund Manager	The Marketeer
The Accountant	Etc...
The Sales Director	
The Salesman	
The Custodial Banker	
The Retail Banker	

Table 4.1

The format of the research approach involves conducting detailed interviews (in the blind) with a diverse population of individuals from the organisations with which we have worked. Some of these organisations have been actual companies, while some have been professional bodies. By 'in the blind', I mean that we knew nothing about the interviewees other than their first name and job title; we had no performance data, for instance. Interviewees describe recent achievements and provide a very detailed account of their career histories. The interviewee relates his narrative in relatively free-flow, with the interviewer probing to understand the detail of their behaviour in terms of thinking and actions at specific and real points in their story.

These interviews are tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts are then studied for evidence of behaviour. The evidence is then modelled in terms of a detailed written framework. At this point, additional data is obtained from the organisation in terms of performance outcomes for the individuals concerned, which gives the opportunity to correlate the framework data with bottom line deliverables.

One of the first studies conducted involved a large group of chemical plant managers. We expected that technical skill, knowledge and educational background would have a significant causal impact upon their level of performance in terms of the management of the plant. While it was clear that this level of knowledge was a critical requirement, i.e. in this case the whole population of managers needed this background, nevertheless it represented only a threshold requirement. What differentiated the outstanding and average performers was the behavioural framework articulated from the study. For example, we correlated educational performance, i.e. from their school and university qualifications, and failed to observe a statistically valid difference between outstanding and average performance in terms of this academic track record. When political efforts continue to increase the share of school-leavers that go on to tertiary education, it may appear heretical to remark that ultimately it is not educational qualification that is the primary factor in work-life performance. Yes, intelligence, or intellect, is needed but not necessarily as denoted by having a degree. In our analysis, graduates possessing different grades produce the same level of managerial and leadership performance (the scales, if tipped towards anyone, favoured those with 2:1s, which I attribute through phlegmatic experience to a simple syndrome of 'work hard, play hard'). We have also found this 'lack of correlation' with both individual contributors and knowledge-based roles and even within academic groups.

We found clear statistical evidence that it was behaviours, or *competencies*, which differentiated the poor, the average and the best performers. **It is not what someone does but how they do it.**

To this idea of behavioural competency is attached the following definition:

'A characteristic behaviour that can be shown to be associated with successful performance'³⁶

An alternative definition would be:

'A way of behaving that is associated with obtaining successful results.'

What do we actually mean by competency?

This chapter provides a thorough explanation to this question. In Table 4.2 we consider ten examples of competencies, which we have found to be particularly important behaviours for leaders to demonstrate.

Competency	Meaning
Initiative	Acts before being directed
Results Focus	Sets clear objectives for self and others in order to achieve an intended outcome
Concern for Impact	Modifies and adapts their approach with others in order to gain their commitment to a particular course of action
Inter-personal Awareness	Seeks to understand the concerns, drivers and motives of others
Tenacity	Demonstrates repeated effort to overcome obstacles and difficulties
Independence	Surfaces difficult issues with others in the face of clear opposition
Strategic Thinking	Develops clear vision for the future and the actions that need to be taken to make this reality
Conceptual Thinking	Thinks broadly about what is occurring in the world to help generate more creative and imaginative solutions to problems and issues

Concern (or Drive) for Excellence	Strives personally and with their team to identify and implement fresh, innovative ways of doing things
Strategic Influencing	Formulates a long-term change agenda and uses different influencing strategies to win commitment from others

Table 4.2

What do these competencies look like in real behavioural terms?

In the following illustrations, the italicised paragraph represents someone describing another's behaviour. The paragraph in upper-case explains why that description represents the particular behaviour.

Initiative

- "When John started in the organisation in his new role, he recognised that there was a need for clear investment to be made in order to maximise the output of the plant. Off his own bat, he set about identifying the critical machinery that needed to be changed, and sought the requisite investment funding. Then he got the team together in order to deliver his required changes."*

HERE JOHN DEMONSTRATES INITIATIVE BECAUSE HE DID SOMETHING WITHOUT BEING TOLD, WHICH ADDED VALUE AND RESULTED IN A POSITIVE OUTCOME FOR THE BUSINESS.

Results Focus

- "I have known Stephen for many years and one thing you can rely on is his ability to deliver on time and on cost. The last time he took on a project, he established a clear plan which included mutually agreed objectives for each member of the project team. As well, he put in place contingencies in case things went wrong. He delivered a clear drive in order to make progress and aligned and co-ordinated everyone's activities to ensure that the job got done."*

STEPHEN DEMONSTRATED RESULTS FOCUS BECAUSE HE HAD A CLEAR OUTCOME IN MIND AND ESTABLISHED CLEAR OBJECTIVES FOR THOSE AROUND HIM. THIS BEHAVIOUR ENSURED AN EFFECTIVE, ON-TIME, ON-COST DELIVERY.

Concern for Impact

- *“Sometimes I am amazed with Jane’s skill in getting people to see things her way. Last year she made a presentation to the engineering department about the need for them to align their activities carefully in terms of the organisation’s marketing and sales activities. When she presented her argument she described it in such a way using facts and figures that it seemed to really appeal to those guys. She absolutely got them on board by how she made her input.”*

JANE DEMONSTRATES HER CONCERN FOR IMPACT BY POSITIONING HER ARGUMENT IN A CERTAIN WAY THAT CAPTURED THE IMAGINATION OF THE ENGINEERS AND GOT THEM TO DO WHAT THE BUSINESS REQUIRED.

Inter-personal Awareness

- *“The person to go and ask about how the land lies is definitely Richard. He just seems to have a very good handle on what makes folk tick. The other week I had a conversation with him about one of our colleagues in the sales department. It was so useful to hear his insight about the person in question that I saw that person in a different light regarding their probable ulterior motives.”*

RICHARD SHOWS HIS INTER-PERSONAL AWARENESS BY PROVIDING TO HIS COLLEAGUE A REALLY USEFUL INSIGHT ABOUT THE CONCERNS, DRIVERS AND MOTIVES OF ANOTHER PERSON.

Tenacity

- *“The thing about Sarah is that she never gives up. Indeed I don’t know if you know this, but prior to joining the organisation she completed her Marketing Diploma which, in itself, is clearly an achievement. It was breathtaking to see her overcome balancing her work and home commitments on top of her college studies. She brings that same type of drive and determination to her current role. Indeed, she seems almost motivated when things get in the way.”*

THIS HIGHLIGHTS SARAH’S TENACITY TO SHOW DRIVE AND ENERGY TO OVERCOME A DIFFICULT SET OF OBSTACLES AND SET-BACKS THROUGH REPEATED EFFORTS IN ORDER TO DELIVER THE PERFORMANCE OUTCOME.

Independence

- *“Jackie is a good member of the team to have on board. While she has a nice manner about her, what is really useful is that she lets you know what she really thinks. Last year, my FD and I were both really committed to a new line of funding we had agreed with our bankers about which we were soon to go public. In the light of this, Jackie suspected we would be pretty annoyed if she disagreed with us but she had the courage to raise her concerns with me in a very clear way. She did this firstly because she thought we were wrong and, secondly, because she thought it was an issue that could not go on unremarked. I must admit at the time I was irritated but soon after her intervention I began to realise what a great input she had made and how right she was.”*

IT IS SO USEFUL FOR A CEO TO HAVE SOMEONE LIKE JACKIE IN THE TEAM. JACKIE IS PREPARED TO GIVE HER VIEWS ABOUT VERY CRITICAL ISSUES EVEN THOUGH SHE KNOWS IT IS RISKY FOR HER. IN THIS EXAMPLE, JACKIE’S TENDENCY NOT TO CURRY FAVOUR BUT TO SAY IT AS IT IS EVENTUALLY ENABLED THE CEO TO AVOID A DISASTROUS FUNDING DECISION.

Strategic Thinking

- *“When Joe was appointed as CEO, he recognised there was a lack of clarity about the type of business we were in. We needed to get back to our core skills of distributing a wide range of competitive retail banking products and services. He thought our acquiring a highly-regarded mortgage business would enhance our position in that area and also provide a range of other cross-selling opportunities. It would signal to the investment community our intent to lead consolidation in the retail banking. He used that thinking to drive our actions over the course of the next few years.”*

JOE DEMONSTRATES HIS ABILITY TO DELIVER STRATEGIC THINKING THROUGH HIS CONSIDERATION OF THE REALITY OF THE MARKET PLACE, THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ORGANISATION HE NOW LEADS AND THE DIRECTION AND SHAPE OF THE BUSINESS HE WANTS TO CREATE.

Conceptual Thinking

- *“When Sylvia was appointed as Director of Manufacturing, her first priority was to look at the issue of lost-time accidents and our poor safety performance, which had dogged many of our industrial units. She saw this as a serious issue both in terms of the well-being of our people as well as the substantial cost and reputation issues that safety represents. She really appreciated the threat to our business in terms of our licence to operate if we didn't improve matters. Additionally, she also recognised the broad range of causal factors that were likely to be underpinning the safety issues. Apart from inadequate technical know-how, she identified how a range of other features including leadership, employee relations issues, and our relationship with the local community were probably linked together as a conglomerate of factors that needed to be addressed.”*

SYLVIA DEMONSTRATES HER CONCEPTUAL THINKING FIRSTLY BY RECOGNISING THE BREADTH OF THE ISSUE IN TERMS OF SAFETY AFFECTING THE BUSINESS'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND REPUTATION AND, SECONDLY, BY APPRECIATING THAT THE CAUSES OF THE ISSUES WERE NOT DOWN TO SIMPLE, UNILATERAL FACTORS BUT WERE, IN FACT, MUCH MORE CONVOLUTED AND RESULTED IN A FORM OF CULTURE MALAISE THAT UNDERMINED SAFETY PERFORMANCE: SHE SAW THE BIGGER PICTURE AND THE INTER-LINKAGES.

Concern (or Drive) for Excellence

- *“Paul is probably the best manufacturing manager I have worked for. From the minute I joined the organisation he was deeply energised to improve the standards, procedures and systems that we used. He was always encouraging us to consider best practice, to benchmark our performance outside the organisation and to seek to improve the manner in which we operated. His approach was relentless and I must say the outcome of his behaviour as a leader was to truly raise the standards of how we operated.”*

PAUL DEMONSTRATES CONCERN FOR EXCELLENCE BY ENCOURAGING HIS STAFF TO CONTINUE TO SEEK TO IDENTIFY AND INTRODUCE ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ORGANISATION'S SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES THAT EXIST WITHIN THE REMIT OF HIS ROLE.

Strategic Influencing

- *“Mark saw himself as a leader of change and I can remember when he joined us that he had a clear view about what needed to change and improve over the course of the next few years. The key point, however, was that he really applied a broad range of influencing tactics and styles to bring all the various parties on board to his view of things. He was no ‘one trick pony’ in terms of the manner in which he engaged with all the different people. In so doing, he won the commitment of these people to his long-term objectives.”*

MARK DEMONSTRATES HIS ABILITY AS A STRATEGIC INFLUENCER BY FIRST OF ALL HAVING A VIEW ABOUT WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE IN THE MEDIUM TO LONGER TERM, I.E. BEYOND TWO TO THREE YEARS. HE RECOGNISED THAT THE NEED TO GET PEOPLE ON BOARD WOULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY DEPLOYING A RANGE OF DIFFERENT INFLUENCING TACTICS IN ORDER TO BUILD COMMITMENT.

Strategic Influencing is a critical behaviour for senior leaders to master but one that we see occurring infrequently. Strategic Influencing is far more sophisticated than, say, the behaviour of Rational Persuasion, where a very fact-based approach is made to win an argument. However, if the other person is not fact-orientated himself, it is entirely feasible that he will be ‘turned off’ by such a black and white submission. Strategic Influencing is also more to do with winning buy-in to significant change

than simply acting in the right manner for a given situation, which is what the behaviour of Concern for Impact considers.

These are simple examples of 'competencies in action'. They underpin the delivery of successful outcomes. They represent behaviours that, when delivered by managers, lead to a much greater chance of them 'upping their game'. As will be explored later, the extent to which an individual can effectively combine all these distinctive behaviours will be reflected in an ever increasingly rounded leadership contribution. For example, in the Independence example, we saw Jackie raising a sensitive and difficult issue with her CEO. If this behaviour is combined, as it were, with Concern for Impact it will be even more effective. The 'what' is said is wedded to the 'how' it is said.

To make the point absolutely clear, it is the frequency by which these behaviours are observed that we have found to correlate statistically with outcomes such as improvements in:

- Sales performance
- Customer satisfaction (as indicated in Chapter 1, that could be students in an educational institution)
- Business growth
- Product development
- Number of successful patents registered
- Efficacy of the marketing campaign
- Project completion etc.

Competency types

There are broadly three types of competencies that our studies have revealed.

Distinguishing competencies

- These refer to behaviours that characterise truly superior performance. If we analyse the behaviour of a group of superior performers and compare them with those doing the same job but to a lower standard, i.e. measured in terms of outcome effectiveness, we see that the key to their superior performance lies in the strength and consistency of their delivering certain competencies.

Threshold competencies

- These represent the behaviours that are a fundamental requirement of the role. Non-delivery would represent extremely poor performance. For example, when a waiter takes orders inaccurately the wrong meals get served. This lack of accuracy or 'Attention to Detail' behaviour would be disastrous. However, having accuracy as a behaviour does not make you an outstanding waiter; it is simply a threshold requirement below which the waiter cannot afford to operate if he wishes to be considered as any way half-decent.

Functional competencies

- By functional, we mean a particular behavioural attribute that has a very specific requirement in a certain role.

For example, it is critical for a Chief Executive to establish the long-term direction and shape of the organisation for which he is accountable. For a Chief Executive, therefore, the competency of *Strategic Thinking* has particular functional relevance.

For the Brand Manager who is required to bring to his work highly creative and novel thinking together with the ability to see connections between sometimes apparently disparate factors, the competency of *Conceptual Thinking* will be of critical importance in the role.

For the manufacturing Production Manager, a key requirement is the ability to drive a continuous level of performance improvement, always endeavouring to achieve more from less, together with the ability to bring in best practice whenever possible. A particularly important competency in this regard is called *Drive for Excellence*, which concerns delivering high quality outputs and finding ways to make them even better.

Functional competencies can actually be both threshold and distinguishing. For example, Strategic Thinking in a senior management position, e.g. a functional head, is likely to be observed as a significant distinguishing competency. However, for a CEO of a major plc, it is likely to be merely threshold behaviour. In other words, to operate at this level it is vital to have this behaviour; not having it could be abject failure.

At a fundamental level, therefore, a threshold competency is delivered by both the superior and average performer. A distinguishing competency is delivered more frequently by the superior performer.

When observing the behaviours of average and outstanding performers there is an absolute, statistically significant difference when you compare the frequency of delivery of observed behaviours and performance outcome; the outstanding performer delivers the distinguishing behaviours more frequently and to greater potency.

There are additional nuances that need to be considered in terms of strength and frequency of delivery of particular competencies, which adds further substantive means to assessing a manager's performance as superior or average, i.e. there is a measurement calibration.

Often, one would expect to see certain competencies demonstrated by people operating at different organisational levels. For instance, if an individual occupies a senior role, it is likely that he will be expected to do work of a more strategic nature than if he were in a more junior post. This will affect the extent to which, say, Strategic Influencing should be witnessed in the way he operates.

Other behaviours reflect a level of complexity, e.g. the scope of change being administered. In this case, therefore, the degree of Initiative displayed would be greater, while some behaviours are not related to grade or inherent complexity of task. They represent an increasing strength of effectiveness of overall delivery, e.g. Inter-personal Awareness or Independence.

The behaviours described earlier in this Chapter represent just some of the 25 behaviours (a summary of which is provided in the Appendices) we have identified through research to be the critical and crucial behavioural ingredients of successful leadership and management delivery. In very many different contexts and situations, each of these behaviours has been demonstrated to be a significant differentiator between average and outstanding performance. Obviously, which competencies are the most important will depend on the particular role and the level of role, and whether they are considered distinguishing or threshold.

In terms of growing one's proficiency in delivering competencies as opposed to skills, far more effort is required to accomplish this; skills are more easily trainable than competencies. While it is admirable to seek to deliver the optimum level in all of the behaviours, this is not realistic. Both I and any of my colleagues have yet to meet a leader who scores 'top marks' across all behaviours. Nevertheless, the better an individual can consistently deliver strongly in as many behaviours as possible, the more superior will be their performance.

Returning to the study of chemical plant managers mentioned a few pages back, I found that those plants that had good Health and Safety records and no pollution incidents were efficient and productive; enjoyed good industrial (or employee) relationships; saw more implementation of innovative ideas to improve operations; and were led by managers who consistently delivered significantly more examples of these behaviours than those managing averagely-performing plants. A higher level of capability in delivering the behavioural component of the *leadership dynamic* resulted in a far healthier Climate, and markedly better performance.

From our research and client engagements, we have developed a range of competency frameworks for different organisations and types of job. From that body of data a 'generic framework' was developed, which is shown in Table 4.3.

LEADERSHIP DOMAIN	COMPETENCY CATEGORY	INDIVIDUAL COMPETENCIES
Develops Vision and Purpose	THINKING	Strategic Thinking Customer Understanding Analytical Thinking Conceptual Thinking Forward Thinking
Gains Organisational Commitment	INFLUENCING	Strategic Influencing Rational Persuasion Relationship Building Interpersonal Awareness Concern for Impact Developing Others
Achieves Organisational Outcomes	ACHIEVING	Results Focus Concern for Excellence Initiative Critical Information Seeking Attention to Detail Thoroughness
Manages Self	SELF MANAGEMENT	Independence Tenacity Flexibility Self Development Organisational Commitment Self-belief Self-control

Table 4.3

In Appendix 3, there are some examples of formal definitions of these behaviours.

The framework consists of four 'clusters' of behaviours. Three of these clusters relate directly to three critical areas of activity in which leaders are engaged. A fourth behavioural cluster relates to how an individual governs himself. See Figure 4.1.

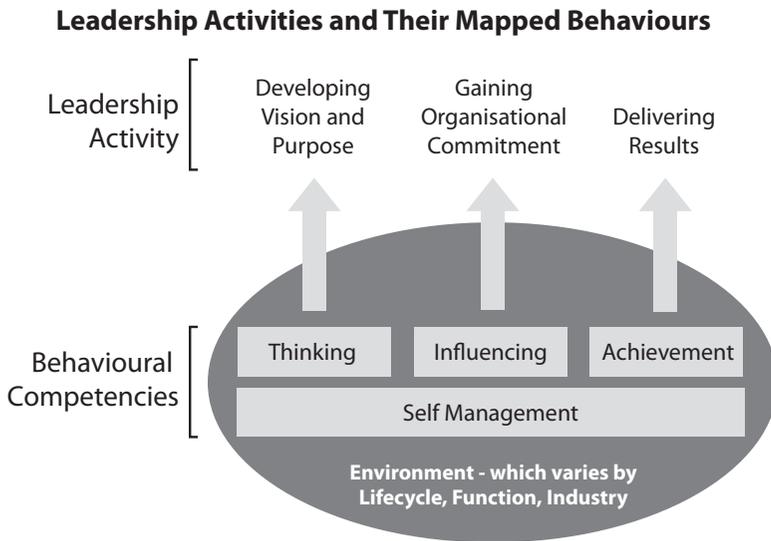


Figure 4.1

More fully, these activities and behaviours relate to the following:

- **Developing Vision and Purpose - Thinking**

This domain of leadership is concerned with managing the direction of the company, business unit, department or team within the context of its market sector and its external and internal customers.

The critical competencies in this domain all concern Thinking, i.e. what goes on in our heads. It covers our ability to analyse and make sense of the issues we face, to understand our customers, and to plan for the long term.

If you wish, this can be construed as 'visioning'.

- **Gaining Organisational Commitment - Influencing**

This domain is concerned with that part of leadership which is so crucial yet is often given insufficient attention, i.e. getting people's buy-in to the changes associated with the vision and required way forward. We seldom achieve much on our own. Influencing describes the way we engage and develop relationships with others, our sensitivity to them, balanced by our ability to persuade and influence. It also includes our role in the development of others, together with our capacity to think about and deliver complex change.

The successful leader will build a high degree of commitment from people at all levels in the organisation, and also from appropriate external bodies. For instance, a Team Leader within a Contact Centre of a bank or major utility could invoke change across the organisation by influencing upwards, laterally, downwards and out to external suppliers, e.g. manufacturers of call routing systems, and delivers exceptional sales and service by virtue of the way he develops his team members.

The simple construct here is of 'networking'.

- **Delivering Results – Achieving**

Achieving covers our ability individually and through others to complete tasks, deliver excellence, initiate and implement new ideas and improvements in the organisation, and acquire and assimilate information to understand what is happening and why.

The behaviour of high-performing leaders is characterised as being focused on delivering results that in the short-term represent clear, explicit steps towards the attainment of the longer term business vision.

The baseline is that of 'realising' (the vision) (some managers refer to 'execution').

The fourth cluster of behaviours relates to how the manager manages himself and contributes significantly to his effective delivery of the other competencies and, thereby, the overarching activities for which he is held accountable. We call this fourth cluster of behaviours, 'Self-Management'.

- **Self-Management**

Behaviours in this cluster provide the foundation on which excellent performance is built. It describes our ability to control and develop ourselves, our commitment to the goals and values of our organisation, our ability to think and act independently and to be responsive to change.

The successful leader demonstrates a determination to succeed whatever the obstacles. This is supported by a propensity to stand up for one's ideas in the face of opposition, and an ability to see the value of alternative viewpoints.

The outstanding leader will also have a clear long-term vision for his own professional and personal development that he is working towards.

The competency frameworks we design and help organisations put into practical application indisputably help individuals to assess and improve their own behavioural performance and, as leaders and managers, that of others, too.

From our substantive evidence, it is clear that the manager who effectively delivers the appropriate mix of behaviours will be the one who is most successful in delivering the 'leadership dynamic' described in Chapter 3. He will ensure that the design of his organisational structure meets the demands of its customers and will possess the drive and imagination to continually upgrade processes so they work effectively. Most obviously and fundamentally, he will possess the required wherewithal to deliver those leadership behaviours that we observed in Chapter 3.

Our frameworks provide a practical, usable common language that can be used in feedback and coaching sessions, which will be understood by both the coach and the person being coached. In so doing, this is more likely to result in action being taken that will cause performance to improve. There is a mutual understanding of the specificity of what is being talked about, i.e. "When you interject in meetings, it is very abrupt. Consider last week..." What is being considered is explicit and tangible; it is neither nebulous nor ethereal.

How do competencies fit with other personal characteristics?

Behavioural competency fits into a framework of personal characteristics that relate to how individuals develop and operate as human beings. Whilst not wanting to wade too deeply into the waters of psychological theory, it will be useful to position competency alongside these other features, which are used to describe people's characteristics.

Skills

- This term should be used to describe an ability or skill to carry out a specific technical or management process successfully, i.e. he is a competent cook, he is competent at negotiating, he is competent at implementing a new computer system, he is competent at designing product packaging.

In this sense, it is essential to recognise, therefore, that 'processes' such as sales or selling, negotiation, change management, even leadership, are not behaviours or competencies. Rather they are the critical outcomes that are required in the job and represent an individual's tasks or objectives. Being effective is determined by a range of critical behaviours or behavioural competencies.

"Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?"

Consider an actor or musician who may very skilled at learning the script or the score. However, if he does not convey the underlying emotion containing the oratory or music, his performance falls far short of what the audience expects to see. Behaviour is the differential.

Benjamin Zander, the principal conductor of the Boston Philharmonic, was remarked to have said, "When the audience comes to see my orchestra, I don't want them to think we have only played the notes off the page. I want them to leave the auditorium *molecularly reconstructed* by virtue of the passion we put into our playing."³⁷

Skills are often learned, technical abilities, including those for which we show no real aptitude, e.g. using a PC, but which we have to develop to deal with the demands of modern-day life.

Other skills may be seen as more innate and stem from our physical or psychological make-up, e.g. we can run fast, we can repair intricate devices, or we can remember people's faces and names. Perhaps not unsurprisingly, we often find that some of our basic skills are aligned with motives or values (see below) because we tend to be better at those things we care about, are interested in and help us achieve our goals.

In Appendix 4, we provide a simple exercise for you to consider that is designed to help you understand this critical distinction between competences, i.e. skills, and competencies, i.e. behaviours.

- **Traits and Predispositions**

These are characteristics of our personality, e.g. being extrovert or a very sociable person as opposed to one who is more introvert and quiet. Clearly, such traits will affect how we behave. Traits are frequently *measured* using questionnaire-based assessment tools, which generate outputs set against definitional frameworks, which enable individuals to describe their own traits as well as those of other people. In so doing, each has a better understanding of himself and of others.

- **Motives**

We touched on motives in Chapter 1 and will return to the topic in Chapter 6. One definition of motives is:

'A recurrent concern for a goal stake which energises and orientates behaviour.'

Thus, when we are hungry we seek something to eat which, once satisfied, removes the motive to do so until we become hungry again.

Earning money is another motive; it is one reason why we turn up at work every day although, at a higher level, we are motivated by our ambitions, our desire to build harmonious relationships, and our sense of striving to

achieve. Motives drive us and affect the priority we give to the different things we do.

- **Values**

These refer to our beliefs and the concepts or principles that that we regard as inviolate. Examples include equality, truth, honesty, integrity, openness and family life. Within organisational, business life, we include concepts such as customer sovereignty and product or service excellence.

Like motives, we are not necessarily fully aware of what we value – until it is gone. Motives are different from values in that they represent deep level drivers, which often underpin the behaviours, or activities, we enjoy and feel ‘truly motivated’ to engage with. Values, on the other hand, represent deep-seated beliefs that tend to be reflected in the behaviours and activities which we feel are important and believe in.

Figure 4.2 contrasts the difference between motives and values. However, both are important factors which influence behaviour and, therefore, drive competencies; yet, while they are important, they are not what we mean by competencies.



Figure 4.2

- **Knowledge**

We spend most of our childhood and adolescence acquiring knowledge about the world. Through the concept of life-long learning, we continue to acquire knowledge throughout adulthood, too, and, if nothing else, it helps us cope with the pace of change in the world around us. Acquiring new knowledge through conscious learning helps us to achieve our aims, i.e. “I need to be able to interpret financial data.” This can be learned and mastered.

What we know obviously affects how we operate. But the ‘outcome’ of knowledge is not what we mean by competencies. In our definition of behavioural competency we would suggest that knowledge is both acquired more quickly and utilised more efficiently if the individual possesses and demonstrates the appropriate behavioural competencies. For example, if the individual is a highly results-focused person, demonstrates the behaviour of tenacity or drive and also combines this with very good analytical thinking, he is more likely to succeed in assimilating a detailed knowledge-based curriculum to a high standard than an individual who does not demonstrate these behaviours.

- **Experience**

While knowledge may be gained from books and observation, experience relates to the things that have actually happened to us. Experience tends to be a tough teacher and we often learn most from events that we would rather not have experienced, e.g. touching the hot stove as a child, saying something inappropriate in a meeting. The old adage, “You learn from your mistakes” is entirely apposite.

Experience teaches us about risk and about the need to plan.

The fit between competency and personality, skills and knowledge

These various factors of skills, traits, motives etc. are connected in quite complex ways. Taken together, they provide useful clues as to why we behave in the way we do. However, for people working in organisations, there is more than enough to do without trying to psycho-analyse ourselves and our colleagues.

In a great deal of recent literature and in many of the organisational competency frameworks we have reviewed, competency is applied as a catch-all phrase for many of the attributes we have just considered. This is an ineffective economy and taxonomy. It causes only confusion and ambiguity. By adhering to the purity of the original thinking about the concept of 'behavioural competency', we dispense with the confusion.

In my mind, competency provides the best means of describing what people do because it is observable and measurable. Stand in front of a group and ask what you are doing, and the group can respond with tangible descriptions. Ask why, and they can only guess because they cannot 'see' your personality, although they could guess.

Considering other measurement calibrations, it is quite clear that each is distinctive and does not get applied to another. For instance, measuring linear distance is done in kilometres and metres (miles and yards for someone of my age!). To measure capacity, it is litres (or gallons). This applies equally to competencies: they are behavioural, nothing else!

This does NOT mean we cannot change and improve our delivered behaviours. Figure 4.3 shows how competency fits alongside the concepts we have just explained.

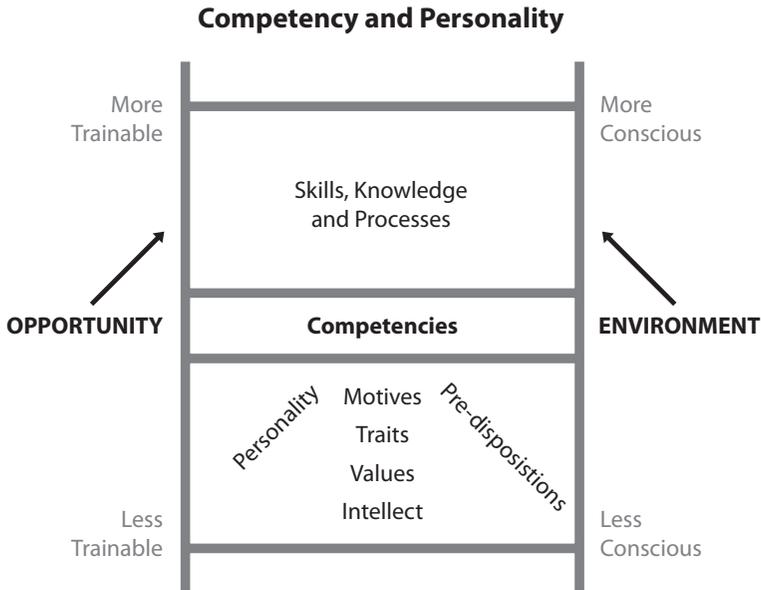


Figure 4.3

In summary, Figure 4.3 demonstrates:

- Traits, motives and values are key drivers of an individual's character and, thereby, can influence the competencies they are likely to deliver. A person's intellectual capacity will also influence the competencies they deliver.
- These competencies influence the effectiveness by which people deliver their skills and knowledge in the work-place.
- The delivery of a particular competency will also be affected by the style or Climate provided by the environment in which they operate, e.g. 'Initiative' is unlikely to emerge in a heavily rule-bound environment or where the leader is highly coercive.
- Competency delivery can also be influenced by the opportunity that the individual has had or that the organisation provides. For example, if the individual is employed in a highly structured, number-crunching type of role, he probably won't get the opportunity or exposure that enables him to deliver a strategic contribution.

- Individuals are more aware, or conscious, of their skills than they are of their competencies, motives, traits and values.

In other words, people tend to be aware of their ability to ride a fast motorbike safely, but tend not to wake up in the morning and think, “I haven’t done any *‘conceptual thinking’* today; I must do something about that”.

This issue of consciousness or lack of consciousness about competencies, motives, traits and values raises the critical value of feedback.

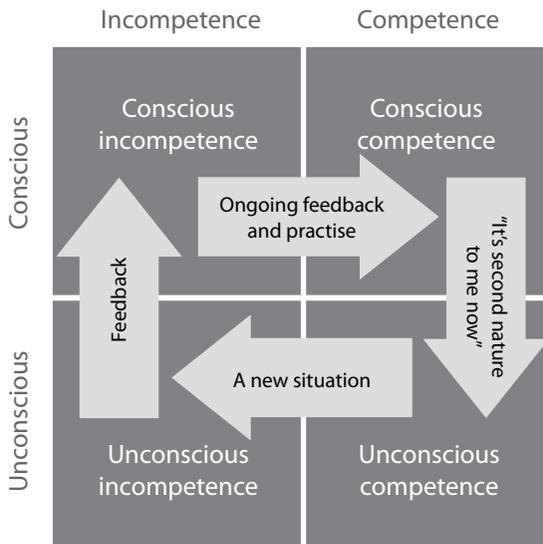


Figure 4.4

Figure 4.4 demonstrates how good feedback enables people to become ‘consciously incompetent’, i.e. individuals know what they are not good at as opposed to being entirely in the dark about certain aspects of their performance. Further effective feedback and coaching should enable the individual to master delivery of a competency in a conscious manner.

Over time, an individual can become ‘unconsciously competent’, i.e. things become second nature, which could lead to someone being

blasé or complacent. However, the volatility of most organisational environments, driven by the dynamics of their market-place, tends not to provide too much time to bask in such glory because things have moved on and additional conscious effort is required.

Moving into a new role, a new environment or situation could result in the individual becoming 'unconsciously incompetent' until such time as he receives some meaningful and pertinent feedback.

Conclusions

I have commented that management processes such as leadership, negotiation and change management, while being important factors within the managerial space, are not just behaviours or competencies.

The definition of competencies that are applied throughout our methodologies relates to specific and detailed descriptions of a range of behaviours, some of which we have described above. Collectively, these underpin critical managerial processes and affect how well they are performed. This may sound somewhat academic, but we know from our practical experience supporting organisations applying competencies in recruitment, performance management and learning and development contexts, that they do indeed have the single most significant impact upon leadership performance than any of the other characteristics that can be brought to bear by an individual. A behavioural focus and style of definition makes for a much more practical application.

An example of this can be neatly illustrated with reference to the process of negotiation. What makes for an average performer? For example, it could be due to low Independence; there is an inability to raise a difficult issue, i.e. to ask for agreement to the deal, to raise the price, to resist reducing the price. On the other hand, it could be due to poor Critical Information Seeking, where the particular negotiator has not really comprehensively evaluated all of the information to hand and sought further information. Another issue could be that the negotiator may simply be weak in terms of his Interpersonal Awareness, and has failed to determine the motives of those with whom he is negotiating or to read effectively their non-verbal signals. (Consider a simple personal issue when you go to buy something, e.g. a car. The good salesperson can read whether you are prepared to buy or walk away. What they then do is more a matter of effective Concern for Impact, of course.) In a change management scenario, the average performer may exhibit weak Forward Thinking, poor Relationship Building, Developing Others, Results

Focus or Tenacity.

Hopefully, the point has been irrefutably made that these competencies, when delivered as a total, inter-dependent, inter-reliant set, collectively underpin the delivery of successful organisational outcomes. If we reconsider the Integrated Framework (see Figure 4.5), competencies are positioned as the 'raw ingredients' of the Leadership Behaviours that help drive Climate.

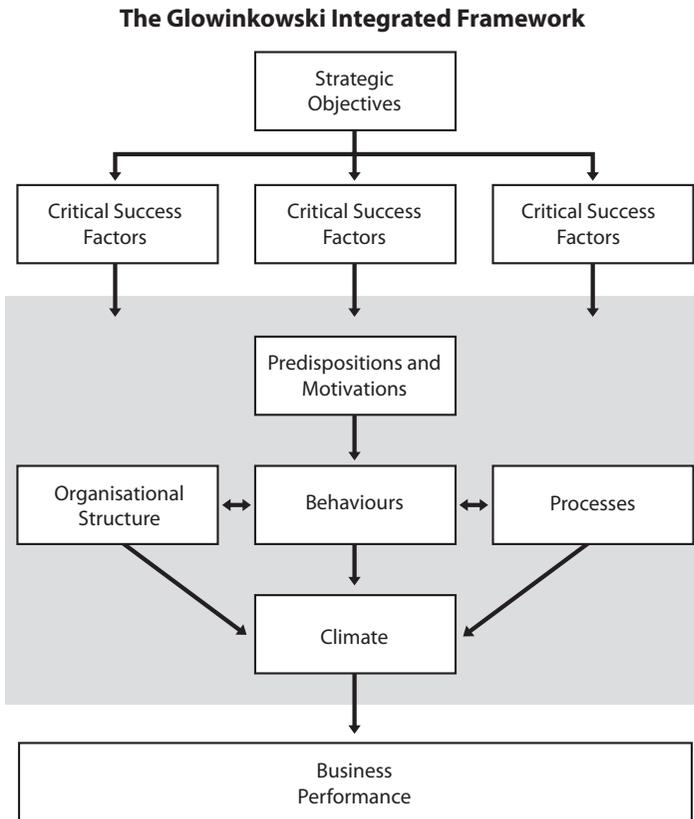


Figure 4.5

Leaders who bring the right mix or blend of behavioural competencies ensure that an effective organisational structure is put in place and, through evolution, remains fit for purpose. They will also establish efficient processes that undergo continual review and refinement to improve their effectiveness. They will have a greater capacity to deliver across the board of the six leadership behaviours defined within the Integrated Framework. There is, therefore, an inter-dependability between the

three 'change levers' that drive Climate (hence the lateral arrows in the illustration).

From my work, therefore, there is compelling evidence that it is the behavioural competencies that underpin outstanding performance rather than some of the other factors that are traditionally considered in selection criteria.

To conclude, at the risk of repeating myself but on the basis this is the most crucial of points:

Competencies are entirely behavioural; anything else and you are not considering competencies!

They are the critical ingredients that underpin effectiveness in managing the leadership dynamic which drives Climate and performance.

They differentiate high from average performance in terms of the achievement of successful outcomes.